

W5YI

America's Oldest Ham Radio Newsletter

REPORT

Up to the minute news from the world of amateur radio, personal computing and emerging electronics. While no guarantee is made, information is from sources we believe to be reliable.

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April 1, 1998

FCC to Adopt New Amateur Rules, Procedures and Systems! *Where things stand.*

Every so often, we do an update on the status of FCC rulemaking that impacts ham radio. Right now, the Commission has four major issues "on its plate." The FCC has under consideration two major proceedings that are sure to bring new privileges to licensed amateur operators. Both have been under consideration for some time and the FCC is just about ready to release them. Keep in mind that a *Notice of Proposed Rulemaking* (NPRM) is just that - a *proposal*. Once the public has had a chance to comment on them, the final rules could be somewhat different.

In addition, the FCC is in the process of implementing their new Universal Licensing System and is looking to further privatize the Amateur Service.

International Amateur Radio Operating

The first is a NPRM that was issued in the fall of 1996. WT Docket 96-188 looks toward "*Authorization of Visiting Foreign Amateur Operators to Operate Stations in the United States*." There are two pending bilateral operating agreements that will provide convenient ways for foreign and U.S. amateur operators to operate their stations in countries other than their own.

Currently, foreign amateur operators are authorized to operate stations in the U.S. under three circumstances.

- (1.) U.S. operating privileges are granted to citizens of Canada who hold amateur service licenses issued by the Government of Canada;
- (2.) Citizens of some 76 countries, whose governments have entered into bilateral reciprocal operating arrangements with the U.S., may obtain non-renewable one-year permits to operate their amateur stations in the U.S.; and
- (3.) Non-U.S. citizens who pass the required examinations are granted licenses in the same manner as U.S. citizens. This latter method is generally used by foreign operators who reside permanently in the U.S. or who are here for lengthy stays.

There are two pending international reciprocal operating arrangements that offer to provide more convenient ways for foreign amateur operators to operate stations in the U.S.: the European Conference of Postal and Telecommunications Administrations (CEPT) radio-amateur license and the Inter-American Convention on an International Amateur Radio Permit (CITEL/Amateur Convention)

Our FCC has proposed an amendment to the Part 97 Rules that would authorize citizens of certain countries in Europe and the Americas to operate stations while on short visits to the United States by implementing these two international

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reciprocal operating arrangements.

The rule change is necessary so that U.S. amateur operators can also operate in twenty-two European countries, eight South American countries, Mexico, and Honduras, and so that operators from those countries can operate their amateur stations in places where the amateur service is regulated by the Commission.

The effect of the action will be to provide a convenient procedure for foreign and U.S. tourists, conference attendees, students, and professors who are licensed amateur operators to operate their amateur stations while on short visits outside of their country. With the United States as a participating non-CEPT country, citizens of our country could operate amateur stations temporarily in participating European countries, and their citizens could enjoy similar operating privileges in the United States.

The CITEL/Amateur Convention is an arrangement for countries in the Americas. Under the CITEL/Amateur Convention, individual amateur operators with an International Amateur Radio Permit (IARP) would have reciprocal operating privileges in each other's countries. The American Radio Relay League, Inc. (ARRL) has offered its services to the Department of State to issue IARPs on a non-discriminatory basis, at no cost, charge, or expense to the United States Government.

There are two classes of CEPT radio-amateur licenses and IARPs. Class 1 requires knowledge of the international Morse code and carries all operating privileges and is similar to the Amateur Extra Class. Class 2 does not require knowledge of telegraphy and carries all operating privileges above 30 MHz and is similar to the Technician Class operator license. The FCC has proposed to authorize for Class 1 operators the frequency privileges of Amateur Extra Class operators -- and for Class 2 operators the frequency privileges of the Technician Class.

The FCC said "Under a CEPT radio-amateur license or an IARP, we do not anticipate that sophisticated station operations, such as beacon, repeater, or auxiliary station operations would be attempted. In addition, our rules do not permit these two new categories of licensees/permittees to engage in such sophisticated operations."

Under the proposed rules, the current reciprocal provisions would continue. The advantage of the two new pending operating arrangements is that they provide a more convenient ways for amateur operators to operate during international travel without first obtaining a permit from each country visited.

The new Proposed Part 97 Rules:

Follows are the new FCC rule amendments concerning the CEPT and IARP licenses that are *proposed* to be added to Part 97. New definitions would be added to Part 97, Sec. 3 as follows:

CEPT radio-amateur license. A license issued by a country belonging to the European Conference of Postal and Telecommunications Administrations (CEPT) that has adopted Recommendation T/R 61-01 (*Nice 1985, revised in Paris 1992 and by correspondence August 1992*).

IARP. International Amateur Radio Permit. A document issued pursuant to the terms of the Inter-American Convention on an International Amateur Radio Permit by a country signatory to that Convention, other than the United States. (*Montreux, Haiti. AG/doc.3216/95.*)

New paragraphs would be added to Section 97.5 and Section 97.7 as follows:

Sec. 97.5 Station license required.

Sec. 97.7 Control operator required.

- (c.) A CEPT radio-amateur license or IARP issued to the person by the country of which the person is a citizen. The person must not:
- (i) Be a resident alien or citizen of the United States, regardless of any other citizenship also held;
 - (ii) Hold an FCC-issued amateur operator license nor reciprocal permit for alien amateur licensee;
 - (iii) Be a prior amateur service licensee whose FCC-issued license was revoked, suspended for less than the balance of the license term and the suspension is still in effect, suspended for the balance of the license term and relicensing has not taken place, or surrendered for cancellation following notice of revocation, suspension or monetary forfeiture proceedings; or
 - (iv) Be the subject of a cease and desist order that relates to amateur service operation and which is still in effect.

In Sec. 97.107, paragraph (c.) would be revised and new paragraphs (d.) and (e.) added to read as follows:

Sec. 97.107 Alien control operator privileges.

- (c.&d.) The privileges available to a control operator holding a valid CEPT radio-amateur license or IARP are as specified in sections §97.207, §97.209, §97.211, §97.213, §97.215, §97.219, and §97.221 of subpart C of this part, and in Section §97.301 of Subpart D of this part, provided the holder:
- (1) Complies with the terms of the agreement between the CEPT and the United States or of the Inter-American Convention on an International Amateur Radio Permit (AG/doc. 3216/95);
 - (2) Is not a resident alien or citizen of the United States;
 - (3) Has not been in any area where radio services are regulated by the FCC for more than 180 days within the immediately preceding five years;
 - (4) Does not hold an FCC-issued operator/primary station license grant; and
 - (5) Does not hold an FCC-issued reciprocal permit.
- (e) At any time the FCC may, in its discretion, modify, suspend, or cancel the reciprocal permit for alien amateur licensee, or the amateur service privileges of any

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Canadian amateur service licensee, CEPT radio-amateur licensee or IARP permittee within or over any area where radio services are regulated by the FCC.

In Sec. 97.119, paragraph (f) explains how a station operating under a CEPT or IARP license should identify his/her station:

Sec. 97.107 Station identification.

- (f) When the station is transmitting under the authority of a reciprocal permit for alien amateur licensee, a CEPT radio-amateur license, or an IARP, an indicator consisting of the appropriate letter-numeral designating the station location must be included before, after, or both before and after, the call sign issued to the station by the licensing country. When the station is transmitting under the authority of an amateur service license issued by the Government of Canada, the station location indicator must be included after or both before and after the call sign. At least once during each intercommunication, the identification announcement must include the geographical location as nearly as possible by city and state, commonwealth or possession.

In Sec. 97.301, the introductory texts of paragraphs (a) and (b) are expected to be revised to read as follows. They indicate the frequency privileges accorded to foreign CEPT and IARP operators when operating in the U.S.

Sec. 97.301 Authorized frequency bands.

- (a.) For a station having a control operator who has been granted a Technician, Technician Plus, General, Advanced, or Amateur Extra Class operator license or who holds a CEPT radio-amateur license or IARP of any class [has full privileges above 30 MHz]
- (b.) For a station having a control operator who has been granted an Amateur Extra Class operator license or who holds a CEPT radio-amateur license Class 1 license or Class 1 IARP [has all amateur radio frequency privileges]:

Additional Spread Spectrum codes to be authorized

In the Spring of last year, the FCC proposed in WT Docket No. 97-12 to "Provide for the Greater Use of Spread Spectrum Communication Technologies in the Amateur Radio Services."

This Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (NPRM), seeks to allow amateur stations to transmit spread spectrum ("SS") emission technologies that employ additional spreading sequences. It also proposes that each SS transmitter be required to automatically limit its power to that actually necessary to carry out the communications when the transmitter power exceeds 1 watt.

This action is in response to a 1995 petition for rule making (assigned RM-8737) from the American Radio Relay League, Inc. The ARRL asked the FCC to amend the rules to allow amateur stations to transmit spread spectrum type emission using additional spreading sequences. It also requested that each SS transmitter be required to incorporate a device to automatically limit its

power to that actually necessary to carry out the communications.

ARRL believes that these rule changes will allow the amateur service to contribute to the development of SS communications. The FCC agreed and said such a rule change was "...consistent with their general policy of allowing licensees flexibility to develop more effective and efficient uses of the radio spectrum."

Spread spectrum is a technique whereby little pieces of the transmitted signal are distributed over a wide segment of spectrum and reassembled according to a formula. The signal power density is typically very low and the duration of a transmission on any frequency in the segment of the spectrum can be but a fraction of a second. SS systems have the unique capacity to share spectrum despite a number of stations already transmitting in the band.

Two types of spreading techniques -- frequency hopping and direct sequence -- are currently authorized on amateur service frequencies above 420 MHz with transmitter powers up to 100 watts. Experiments conducted by several amateur stations operating under *Special Temporary Authority* over several years have shown that stations transmitting SS emissions can coexist with other amateur stations, and in many cases these spread spectrum emissions are totally undetectable by other amateur stations operating on the same frequency.

Since introduction of SS in the amateur radio service, numerous commercial applications of SS have also evolved, including personal communications services, remote meter reading and position locating.

As requested by the ARRL and Part 15 equipment providers, the FCC is requiring that power control circuitry be employed which automatically reduces the radiated power of an amateur station transmitting an SS emission to the minimum level necessary to conduct communications. The FCC also asked for suggested methods that could be used to minimize any potential interference between amateur station operations and Part 15 devices.

The FCC proposed to eliminate the rules that restricted amateur stations to transmitting only frequency hopping and direct sequencing spreading techniques. Spread Spectrum emission transmissions must not be used to make communication secret nor may a station transmitting SS emissions cause harmful interference to stations employing other authorized emissions.

The FCC said the intent of the NPRM was to compile a record in sufficient detail for the FCC to determine whether they should authorize amateur stations to use additional spread spectrum type emission technologies and whether such use would facilitate the ability of the amateur service to contribute to the development of SS communications. Many amateurs oppose the NPRM due to concerns that greater use of SS will result in

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interference to amateur stations engaging in satellite communications, weak signal terrestrial and Earth-Moon-Earth communications, and repeaters.

The new Proposed Part 97 Rules:

Follows are the new *proposed* FCC rule amendments concerning new SS spreading techniques that are to be added to Part 97. New definitions would be added to Part 97, Sec. 3 as follows:

SS - Spread-spectrum emissions using bandwidth-expansion modulation emissions having designators with A, C, D, F, G, H, J or R as the first symbol; X as the second symbol; X as the third symbol.

Section 97.305(b) would be revised to read as follows:

Sec. 97.305 Authorized emission types.

- (b) A station may transmit a test emission on any frequency authorized to the control operator for brief periods for experimental purposes, except that no pulse or SS modulation emission may be transmitted on any frequency where pulse or SS emissions are not specifically authorized.

Section 97.311 would be amended by revising paragraphs (a.), (b.), and (g.), and removing and reserving paragraphs (c.) and (d.) to read as follows:

Sec. 97.311 SS emission types.

- (a.) SS emission transmissions by an amateur station are authorized only for communications between points within areas where the amateur service is regulated by the FCC and between an area where the amateur service is regulated by the FCC and an amateur station in another country that permits such communications. SS emission transmissions must not be used for the purpose of obscuring the meaning of any communication.
- (b.) A station transmitting SS emissions must not cause harmful interference to stations employing other authorized emissions, and must accept all interference caused by stations employing other authorized emissions.
- (g.) The transmitter power must not exceed 100 W under any circumstances. If more than 1 W is used, automatic transmitter control shall limit output power to that which is required for the communication. This shall be determined by the use of the ratio, measured at the receiver, of the received energy per user data bit (Eb) to the sum of the received power spectral densities of noise ($N_{\text{INF}} > 0$) and co-channel interference ($I_{\text{INF}} > 0$). Average transmitter power over 1 W shall be automatically adjusted to maintain an $E_b / (N_{\text{INF}} > 0 + I_{\text{INF}} > 0)$ ratio of no more than 23 dB at the intended receiver.

Amateur Service Licensing to be Further Privatized

We mentioned this in our March 1st issue so we won't go into too much detail here except to say that the FCC has released a list of 31 proposed initiatives to be

explored as part of its first biennial regulatory review. Beginning in 1998, the FCC will -- in every even-numbered year -- determine whether certain FCC regulations are no longer necessary.

The review is aimed at eliminating or modifying regulations that are overly burdensome or no longer serve the public interest. One of the initiatives listed in the working document released on February 5, 1998, concerns the Amateur Service. The FCC said that it was looking toward streamlining the Part 97 Amateur Radio Service and that it would "Seek comment on amending Parts 0, 1, and 97 of FCC Rules to privatize further the administration of the Amateur Radio Services and to simplify the licensing process."

According to a press release, a recent FCC Wireless Telecommunication Bureau forum on the 1998 Biennial Review focused on streamlining and deregulating rules including "...modification of licensing procedures to permit increased operational flexibility and to promote technical innovation." No specifics were released, however. The FCC's Wireless Telecommunication Bureau administers rules in the Amateur service.

The FCC said, "The Bureau/Office proposals will be presented to the Commission for consideration this winter and next Spring, with proposals for final action to be presented to the Commission next summer and fall." We will have to wait and see what WTB has in mind for the Amateur Service.

Amateur Service to join Universal Licensing System

The FCC has recently adopted a NPRM in advance of implementing its Universal Licensing System. The purpose of ULS is to consolidate, revise and streamline rules governing license application procedures for all radio services licensed by the FCC's Wireless Telecommunications Bureau. ULS is an automated licensing system now in development that will be used to handle all future licensing of wireless radio services. The Amateur Service is one of the radio services included in the program and it is expected that the new licensing system will go online this coming September.

When fully operational, ULS will replace eleven separate licensing systems and databases now being used for various wireless services with a single system by consolidating all radio service applications and licensing rules. The FCC said the new licensing system would eliminate nearly 200 duplicating and inconsistent rules in various radio services.

A new ULS application form will replace over 40 existing wireless application forms with just five new forms. Thus, all services will use the same set of forms for application information. The existing FCC Form 610 Amateur Radio application form will be replaced with a form revised to incorporate information needed by ULS.

ULS will support full electronic filing of all licensing-related applications in all services and other filings

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associated with such applications. The VECs will still electronically file Amateur Service new and upgraded license applications, but amateurs (or their agents) will be able to renew and/or modify their own licenses on-line. Also being considered is whether manual filing of applications should be completely abolished altogether. The FCC would like to have all new and license modification documents filed electronically using ULS since it will greatly reduce the time and expense involved to handle the application.

ULS will also provide the public with on-line access to public licensing data including that of the Amateur Service. The information will be obtainable by dialing into the FCC's network using any World Wide Web browser.

The Universal Licensing System lets you use a PC to look up, manage, and renew any radio license. You will even be able to pay any applicable fees with a credit card -- such as for a new Vanity call sign -- by using a password-protected account through a secure Internet connection to the FCC. Amateurs are being asked to populate the ULS database now with their licensing information.

You open your ULS account by registering your TIN (Taxpayer Identification Number) with the FCC. For an individual the TIN is your social security number. To get set up under ULS, you need to register your current amateur license and call sign using a Web browser on the Internet. More information on Universal Licensing is available at: <http://www.fcc.gov/wtb/uls>.

1998 YOUNG HAM OF THE YEAR AWARD NOMINATING PERIOD NOW OPEN

The nominating period for 1998 "Young Ham of the Year Award" is now open. Originally known as the "Westlink Report Young Ham of the Year," this award program, now in its second decade, is presented annually to a U.S. licensed Radio Amateur who is 18 years of age or younger and who has provided outstanding service to the nation, his community or has contributed to the betterment of the state of the communication art through the Amateur Radio hobby. Any continental United States (FCC-licensed) ham radio operator aged 18 and younger is eligible to be nominated.

All nominations must be submitted before June 30, 1998 on an official application. Application forms are available for a self-addressed stamped envelope from: 1998 Young Ham of the Year Award, c/o Newsline, 28197 Robin Ave., Saugus CA 91350. The nominating applications are also available for electronic download from several sites including the Newsline website at: <http://www.arnewsline.org>.

With continued corporate sponsorship, the award presentation is scheduled take place at the 1998 Huntsville Hamfest. The Huntsville Hamfest is one of the

nations largest and most popular ham radio conventions. It is held annually the third weekend in August at the Von Braun Civic Center in downtown Huntsville and usually attracts 7000 or more attendees. The 1998 "Young Ham of the Year" will also get to spend a week at Spacecamp-Huntsville.

The Young Ham of the Year Award program was conceived in 1985 by then Westlink Report "Editor-in-Chief" Bill Pasternak, WA6ITF. His desire is to highlight the accomplishments of the nation's many young radio hobbyists, and to encourage the entry of more young people into the exciting and rewarding hobby of Amateur Radio.

With the absorption in 1995 of the Westlink Report readership base into Worldradio Magazine, the awards originator has decided to continue it under the banner of his own "Amateur Radio Newsline" organization.

The Amateur Radio Newsline, better known as "Newsline" is the worlds largest not-for-profit and totally independent ham radio broadcast news and data information service. It was organized in 1976 by Jim Hendershot WA6VQP and Bill Pasternak WA6ITF. Since that time it has produced and aired over 1070 consecutive weeks of news of free bulletin programming dealing with Amateur Radio and related personal communications issues.

Corporate underwriting for the "Young Ham of the Year Award" program is traditionally supplied by Yaesu U.S.A. Corporation and CQ Magazine.

Past recipients of the Young Ham award, all of whom epitomize the heart of dedication to their nation include Shawn Alan Wakefield, WK5P, of Bartlesville, OK (1986); David Rosenman, KA9PMK, of Muncie, IN (1987); Jonathan Binstock, NK3D, of Potomac, MD (1988); Erin McGinnis, KA0WTE, of Topeka, KS (1989); Mary Alestra, KB2IGG, of Staten Island, NY (1990); Richard S. "Sammy" Garrett, AA0CR, of St. Louis, MO (1991); Angela (Angie) Fischer, KB0HXY, also of St. Louis (1992); Kevin Boudreaux N5XMH of New Orleans LA (1993); Allison Zettwoch KD4CKP of Louisville, KY (1994); Adam Weyhaupt, N9MEZ of Alton, IL (1995); Toby Metz, KB7UIM of Boise, ID (1996) and Brian Mileshosky, N5ZGT, of Albuquerque NM (1997).

Individuals making nominations are required to supply full and complete verification of any claims made regarding your nominees qualifications. The more documentation that you supply, the easier it is for the judges to reach a decision. Nominations without this documentation will be returned without being given consideration.

A person selected as "Young Ham of the Year" is judged on his/her contributions to society through Amateur Radio. Decision of the judges is final. The nominating forms along with all substantiating materials should be mailed before June 30, 1998 to the 1998 Young Ham of the Year Award, 28197 Robin Avenue, Santa Clarita, CA. 91350

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COMPUTER INFO

■ **Having trouble learning or using a software program ...or implementing the bells and whistles on your fancy new computer?** Intel is launching a new hardware/software help/support service which will be headquartered in the Portland suburb of Hillsboro, Oregon, called Answer Express. No matter what your problem is, Intel says they can help. The \$49.95 Answer Express software package includes three months of service. After that, customers will be able to dial up the Help Center website to pose their questions (or browse *Frequently Asked Questions*) at \$5.95 a month. Combined online information plus speaking to a live Technical Support person costs \$14.95 a month. < <http://www.answerexpress.com> >

■ **Apple is working on new portable and TV set-top devices** that offer Internet access and play music CDs and video DVD movies. The top-secret project (code-named "Columbus") is Apple's first effort at a low-priced network computer (NC). Apple's stock has more than doubled since last December.

CYBERSPACE NEWS

■ **Effective April 1st, Preview Software will be offering a new way** for software writers, publishers and sellers to package and distribute computer programs on the Web. "Vbox" (virtual box) allows potential customers to use a trial business or home software package for up to 15 days - and if they decide to purchase - download the full program from the Internet. Payment is by credit card online. "Vbox" has marketing arrangements with several software sites - including CNET's www.BuyDirect.com and <http://www.software.net>

■ **Competition comes to America Online.** "Yahoo! Online - Powered by MCI" is a new consumer online service which is really a marriage of two separate services. It began service on March 16th. Both will operate independently of each other. Advertising/sponsorship-supported Yahoo will handle all of the programming and MCI-Worldcom will provide the Internet access (via 300 local numbers), 24-hour customer service and e-mail accounts. The big story is the cost.

America Online just increased their rate from \$19.95 to \$21.95 for unlimited access. Yahoo! Online charges \$14.95 for the first three months and \$19.95 thereafter. But if you have MCI long distance phone service, the cost remains at \$14.95 indefinitely - a 32% monthly saving over AOL! You can sign up and change your long distance service by calling 1-800-GET-YAHOO or order over the Web at <http://online.yahoo.com>. You will be sent the Yahoo! Online CD.

MCI plans a whopping \$20 million advertising campaign focusing on lower monthly fees to bolster its online business. MCI currently has about 400,000 Internet customers compared with AOL's 12 million users.

■ **Bigfoot Partners, Ltd., a New York-based web company has obtained a court order against noted spammer Sanford Wallace of Cyber Promotions.** The federal consent decree requires him to pay \$10,000 a day if he or anyone using his spam software forges the return address of the bigfoot domain on its unsolicited messages. Thousands of copies of his junk e-mail generating software have been sold. Wallace has been ordered to remove all references to the Bigfoot company from his software packages.

In a related development, "Sendmail, the electronic post office" -- an e-mail routing program -- has included new anti-spam tools in its latest version. Version 8.9 rejects e-mail from known spam addresses and contains code that forces spammers to disclose their real Internet address.

WASHINGTON WHISPERS

■ **Just what is a disability?** The FCC uses the same definition as used under the *Americans with Disabilities Act* (ADA). "Disability" is defined under the ADA as:

- A physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more of the major life activities of such individual;
- A record of such an impairment; or
- Being regarded as having such an impairment.

Congress is on record as believing the ADA definition of disability principally covers individuals with functional limitations of hearing, vision, movement, manipulation, speech, or interpretation of information.

The FCC has issued a *Notice of Inquiry* (NOI) seeking information on "...ful-

filling our congressional mandate to ensure that persons with disabilities enjoy the full benefits of the telecommunications revolution that is becoming such an essential element of our educational, social, political and economic future."

In Section 255 of the *Telecommunications Act of 1996*, Congress expressed its clear intent that telecommunications services and equipment be made accessible to the 40 million Americans with disabilities.

■ **Associate WTB Bureau Chief, Gary L. Stanford, W4FDP will be retiring** after 37 years of federal service. He heads up the FCC's Gettysburg licensing facility. A retirement party will be held at the Holiday Inn in Gettysburg, PA, on Friday, April 17, 1998 at noon..

■ **The Clinton Administration has endorsed a plan that will keep the Internet tax-free for six years.** The *Internet Tax Freedom Act* will prevent governments from collecting sales taxes on most purchases made over the Internet by treating electronic commerce the same as mail-order sales. Also barred will be taxes on Internet access. State governments say the act violates states' rights, will cost them needed tax revenue and is unfair to local stores which must collect sales taxes.

■ **Stephen Dunifer of Radio Free Berkeley Microradio fame is planning a rally at the annual convention of the National Association of Broadcasters.** A federal judge in Oakland refused the FCC's request for an injunction against Dunifer's station last November and ruled that the court has jurisdiction to rule on the constitutional issues he raises. Unlicensed Radio Free Berkeley (104.1 FM) has been on the air for some five years now. Here is the press release he issued to the "alternative" news media. [Quote]

Fear & Transmitters in Las Vegas - Micropower meets the NAB

Free Radio Gathering - April 6-8

Coinciding with the National Association of Broadcasters Convention in Las Vegas, the forces of micropower broadcasting will gather there to confront megapower corporate broadcasters with flea power (creating the itch the FCC can not scratch) emanations.

Workshops, planning sessions, direct actions at the NAB convention, etc. will highlight April 6,7,8. Our gathering spot will be the Unitarian Church at 3616 E. Lake Mead Blvd., a little northeast of downtown Las Vegas between N. Pecos

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Bldv. and Clifford St. The facility will hold about 200 folks in the main hall along with some smaller rooms for individual sessions and workshops. A kitchen is there as well so if we can get a food crew together we can have meals in house.

Opening session will take place on Monday, April 6 at 10 AM. The schedule of workshops and other activities is still being organized.

Planning for NAB actions will take place on Monday evening. Our attorney, Luke Hiken, is scheduled to be on an NAB convention panel opposite the general counsel for the FCC on Tuesday morning. At a noon luncheon on Tuesday the NAB is scheduled to induct Rush Limbaugh into their hall of fame, oh the comedic potential. A free radio station will be on the air for the duration of our stay and turned over to the community when we leave.

Given the fact that an East Coast Micropower Gathering is happening right before the event in Las Vegas. We can take what will come out of their workshops and planning sessions and work with it to achieve some sort of consensus for a national strategy and unity.

We are asking \$15 to \$25 registration for the conference. Housing is being worked on but no guarantees. Hotels are cheap in the north section of downtown, by sharing a room you can keep the cost down to less than \$20 a night per person. A list of hotels is being compiled with rates. *Las Vegas Food Not Bombs* will be asked to help with food preparations.

Car caravans will be leaving from both Berkeley and Los Angeles on the morning of Sunday, April 5th and returning the morning of Thursday, April 9th.

On the weekend of April 10-12 mass civil disobedience actions are planned for the Nevada test site. Folks who are planning on going to those actions are being informed about our conference so they can make plans to arrive early if they wish to attend. We anticipate a lot of support and attendance from a variety of organizations in the Las Vegas area. Their is a fairly strong union activist presence in Las Vegas.

On to Las Vegas - Abbey Hoffman meets Hunter Thompson! Signed: Stephen Dunifer, Free Radio Berkeley [End Quote]

■ Much to the dismay of the mainstream media, at a recent telecom conference held in Chicago, FCC Chairman Bill Kennard said **the FCC is indeed working on a technical plan to create a low-power radio service** for small businesses,

churches and community groups to gain entry-level access to broadcasting. The rumors are that a new one-watt radio service on AM and FM frequencies will eventually emerge.

Broadcasters regard the microradio concept as legalization of the pirate radio stations they oppose. Kennard, on one hand, called the unlicensed broadcasters "vigilantes" and assured the NAB that the FCC was committed to shutting them down. He said 97 enforcement actions were taken last year against them. On the other hand, he concedes that microbroadcasters have a point when they complain that it is hard for community broadcasters to get on the air.

The low power microbroadcasting service petition filed by J. Rodger Skinner, Jr., W4FM of Pompano Beach, FL that we mentioned in our last newsletter has been assigned: RM-9242. Initial statements opposing or supporting the *Petition for Rulemaking* close on April 27, 1998, replies are due by May 26.

■ **Edwin Valentin of Pontiac, Michigan has been fined \$5,000 by the FCC for operating an unlicensed low power FM radio station.** The FCC's Detroit Office, prompted by a private-sector complaint, monitored and located unauthorized transmissions being made by Valentin on 106.3 MHz on October 24 and 28, 1997.

On December 5, 1997, an FCC agent inspected the station and found Valentin operating a station which he identified as "Musical Radio". He acknowledged that the station had no license to broadcast from the FCC. On December 10, 1997, the Detroit Office issued Valentin a *Notice of Apparent Liability* (NAL).

In his response, Mr. Valentin asked the FCC to cancel the NAL contending that the Commission's regulatory scheme operates as an impermissible infringement which restricts his First Amendment right to broadcast over the airwaves. This constitutional violation, Valentin maintains, arises from the FCC's policy which does not allow the licensing of any new stations below 100 watts.

Valentin said that the Commission's effective ban on very low power broadcasting also violates the FCC's statutory mandate to "...study new uses for radio, provide for experimental uses of frequencies, and generally encourage the larger and more effective use of radio in the public interest." Valentin was ordered to pay the \$5,000 fine for violation of Section 301

by April 10, 1998.

■ As required by the *1996 Telecom Act*, the FCC amended Part 15 of Commission's rules to **require that television signal receivers with 13-inch or greater picture screens be equipped with technological features** to allow parents to block the display of violent, sexual, indecent or other programming they believe is harmful to their children. The so-called "v-chip" will enable blocking of video programming based on program ratings.

Under Section 551, the Commission is required to adopt rules to require television receivers to block programming that contains such material by decoding rating information transmitted via line 21 of the vertical blanking interval ("VBI"). The imbedded codes are: S for Sex, V for Violence, L for foul Language, D for suggestive Dialogue and FV for children's shows with Fantasy Violence.

The v-chip will be phased in with half of new television receiver models required to have the v-chip by July 1, 1999, and all 13" or greater models required to contain the blocking technology by January 1, 2000. About 23 million TV sets are sold each year. The v-chip will add about \$5 to \$20 to the cost of a set. [Docket: ET-97-206 adopted March 12th by R&O]

AMATEUR RADIO

■ In addition to the NPRMs we mentioned, **the FCC has under consideration four Petitions for Rulemaking submitted by the ARRL.**

In **RM-9150**, the League wants to privatize enforcement of serious rule (malicious interference) violations in the Amateur Service. Proposed is a system whereby the Amateur Auxiliary program would provide input to the ARRL's leadership who would present a legal case directly to the FCC's Chief, Administrative Law Judge. Such action would bypass the FCC Wireless Telecommunications Bureau.

ARRL also wants (in **RM-9196**) severely handicapped amateur radio license examination applicants to be required to at least attempt the 13 and/or 20 words-per-minute telegraphy examination prior to being granted a 20 wpm code exam waiver. The League also seeks authorization for VE's to have the right to request medical information pertaining to the applicant's handicap from the certifying physician.

In **RM-8763**, the ARRL asks the

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FCC to "enhance" PRB-1, the federal preemption of Amateur Radio antennas. The League wants to include deed restrictions, covenants, CC&Rs and condominium rules. ARRL also wants the FCC to specify a reasonable antenna height, and to address issues such as local land-use restrictions, approval processes and costs.

The ARRL asks in **RM-9115** to allow expanded RACES/ARES intercommunications and to extend drill time limitations.

■ **Efforts to organize coordinators of amateur repeaters and auxiliary stations under a "National Frequency Coordination Council" (NFCC) is off to a rocky start.** Many questions are being raised by local coordinators. With some there is a general dissatisfaction with the leadership of NFCC. Where a geographic area is being served by competing frequency coordinators, as is the case in Indiana, the FCC staff has been asked to shed light some light on the issue of the right to compete. Repeater owners in Oklahoma are upset over the tactics being used by NFCC concerning charter membership.

The FCC has assured the inquiring parties that frequency coordination is "purely voluntary" - that amateur frequency coordinators nor their organization are a regulatory agency and have no power as such. The initial concept of a *Single Point of Contact* was that the FCC requested it. It quickly became apparent the SPOC was not the FCC's idea, but rather the brainchild of those who hoped to sell the idea to the FCC based on the misleading claim that they were supported by 95 percent of the frequency coordination groups in the U.S.

Some of the repeater community believe that the motivation for organizing repeater coordinators under the NFCC was so that the ARRL would have access to the database for their Repeater Directory.

■ The March 5th edition of *The New York Times* [newspaper] carried an excellent story entitled **"Ham Radio, Version 2.0, for the Silicon Era."** It talks about how ham radio is changing. "A lot of today's ham gear relies as much on microchips and software as it does on quartz crystals, odd-looking antennas and other elements of traditional wireless setups," it says. "In a sense, the hams' shortwave radio spectrum was the original version of what is now called cyberspace...." The article discusses the newer communications modes ...including amateur packet radio, moon-bounce and satellite communication ...and how today's amateur "...operates

mass-produced equipment from Japan. ...build it yourself radio gear, is but a memory." It contends that "...amateur radio and the Internet [is] crossbreeding..."

Mentioned in the story are well known amateurs Keith Baker, KB1SF (AMSAT), Brad Thomas, KC1EX (ARRL) and Dwayne Hendricks, WA8DZP (TAPR.) At press time, the story was still available online at: <http://www.nytimes.com/library/tech/98/03/circuits/articles/05ham-radio.html>

■ **The hobby of amateur radio has reached its centenary.** According to the *Radio Society of Great Britain* (RSGB), in 1898 a young army officer, Lieutenant M. C. J. Dennis followed the lead of Guglielmo Marconi, setting up his own experimental wireless station at Woolwich, in London.

Lieutenant Dennis later claimed that his station was the "first non-professional wireless experimental station in the world." His claim was never challenged, thus establishing Dennis as the world's first true radio amateur.

The RSGB is marking this centenary year of amateur radio by launching two new awards for HF and VHF-UHF activity between 1 January and 31 December.

■ **School groups are once again talking to astronauts on the MIR space station.** It had been a year filled with mishaps - including a collision between MIR and a resupply ship -- since the MIR crew had been able to take time out to chat with school kids over ham radio. Monday, February 23rd marked the return of the SAREX school group contacts. Three schools in California, Colorado and South Carolina have now had successful two way amateur radio contacts with U.S. Astronaut Andy Thomas, KD5CHF/VK5MIR, aboard the MIR space station.

On Monday, February 23, 1998 six youngsters from the Shell Beach Elementary School in Pismo Beach, California, made contact with Thomas aboard MIR. The contact was made using the Houston, Texas, Telebridge station, W5RRR, with Matt Bordelon, KC5BTL, at the controls.

On Tuesday February 25th the Prairie Hills Elementary school located in Colorado Springs, Colorado, talked with Thomas as some 400 youngsters seated in the gym listened intently. Press coverage of this contact was extensive, with three major networks and several local newspapers in attendance.

The Space Amateur Radio EXperiment (SAREX) program had its third school

group success on February 26th as the Buist Academy in Charleston, South Carolina enjoyed a very successful contact as well. This contact was made via the Adelaide, Australia Ground Station courtesy of Graham Ratcliff, VK5AGR. The local Charleston media was represented by two local television stations and the Post Courier newspaper. The entire contact was also retransmitted live over the Charleston Amateur Radio Society 2 meter repeater.

At the end of January, Australian-born Thomas was joined aboard MIR by two new Russian crew members, Nikolai Budarin RV3FB and Talgat Musabayev RO3FT, making it an all-radioamateur crew. Thomas has been a U.S. citizen since 1986, but regained his Australian citizenship during a return to Australia last December. His VK5MIR license was issued under the standing reciprocal agreement between Australia and the U.S.

In related news, U.S. astronaut Jerry Linenger, KC5HBR, who was aboard the MIR space station for 122 days, has retired from the astronaut corps, according to NASA sources. Linenger, a physician and a captain in the US Navy, was aboard the Russian space station from January to May 1997. Linenger will pursue private interests. KC5HBR was aboard the space station when a fire broke out just over a year ago, ignited by oxygen-generating "candles" used on the spacecraft. The fire, a collision with a Progress supply rocket last summer, several computer failures, and other problems made international news and led some officials to question sending additional US astronauts to train aboard MIR. [AMSAT News Service]

■ The *Radio Society of Great Britain* reports that **two British marines are attempting the first British unsupported polar expedition from Canada to the North Pole.** Sergeant Sean Chappel and Corporal Alan Chambers set off on the 3rd of March carrying enough food for around 80 days. The pair will attempt weekly radio contact with a station operated by Laurence Howell, GM4DMA. They will be using a portable radio which consists of a 12-channel 12-volt -pound 30W SSB transceiver and dipole antenna. Power will be provided by a Lithium battery capable of supplying power for the whole expedition. [Thanks, RSGB]

■ **The International Amateur Radio Union (IARU) has set September 19, 1998, as World Amateur Radio Day.** The theme will be **"Amateur Radio: Communicating Worldwide for Three**

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Quarters of a Century." The theme will honor the first two-way transoceanic amateur radio contact held on November 27, 1923 between French station 8AB and American stations 1XAM and 1MO. This contact was quickly followed by many others and ushered in the "short wave era." Beginning with the year 2000, which will mark the 75th anniversary of the founding of the IARU, World Amateur Radio Day will return to its original date of April 18th.

■ **Canadian amateurs are furious with their government!** For nine years, RAC (*Radio Amateurs of Canada* - their national ham radio society) has been working toward unifying Canadian amateurs into one organization. Four years ago, Industry Canada (their telecommunications regulatory agency) began a "delegation initiative" that was to lead to RAC assuming administrative responsibility for Amateur Radio affairs.

After the agency surveyed Canadian amateurs, and without warning, the entire initiative was abruptly scrapped by Industry Canada (IC). RAC President Farrell Hopwood, VE7RD has now fired off a letter to IC. Here are some quotes:

"A critical and major step, at the urging of your officials, was the merging of two associations into one organization, *Radio Amateurs of Canada*. An immediate benefit was the establishment of a joint *Industry Canada - RAC Canadian Amateur Radio Advisory Board (CARAB)*. The Board was established specifically for the purpose of consultation on matters affecting the amateur radio service from the viewpoints of both *Radio Amateurs of Canada* and the department."

"At the first meeting of the Advisory Board, in September 1993, IC officials proposed formation of a joint *IC-RAC* working group to develop a business case for delegation of certain administrative functions to RAC. ...The delegation concept was enthusiastically embraced by thousands of Radio Amateurs across Canada."

"You can readily understand that RAC found it appalling and alarming that IC officials suddenly, without warning or explanation, announced termination of the delegation initiative. We were further discouraged to learn that a survey, directly polling individual Radio Amateurs had been commissioned, bypassing the very organization that your officials had encouraged us to form. It was indicated that the results of the survey and other considerations would ultimately shape Industry

Canada's future administration of the Amateur Radio service. These actions are completely contrary to the CARAB agreement to consult on such serious matters. This abrupt, but obviously premeditated withdrawal has seriously shaken RAC's confidence in your officials, particularly in light of the ambiguous reasons since advanced for canceling the delegation plan."

"Precipitous termination of the delegation initiative has far reaching implications not only for Radio Amateur of Canada as an organization, but also for the Amateur Radio service generally."

RAC President Hopwood asked for an immediate meeting with Industry Canada.

■ **It looks like radioamateurs in Australia will also have to follow mandatory RF safety regulations.** The *Australian Communications Authority (ACA)* has proposed regulations to limit people's exposure to radio frequency electromagnetic energy. The comment period on a discussion paper released last October is now over.

Australian amateurs would have to demonstrate compliance with limits imposed by *Australian Standard AS 2772.1*, while commercial amateur equipment would have to be certified under the standard, with handheld VHF and UHF transceivers having the most stringent requirements. Amateur compliance with AS 2772.1 is currently voluntary.

The *Wireless Institute of Australia (WIA)* is their national ham society) wants the ACA take the lead from the United States by specifying RF power output thresholds which are deemed to comply with the rules, otherwise the station would have to be formally evaluated. The power thresholds for most bands are above the powers typically used by many U.S. amateurs.

The WIA position is that compliance with RF emission standards should not impose overly burdensome technical or administrative requirements on amateur licensees and that the proposed RF safety rules take into account the quite different, if not unique, nature of amateur station operation. [Thanks, WIA]

■ **ARRL Northwestern Division Director, Mary Brown MN7N sent out a letter to ham clubs** in her division in which she seeks help and input. She said (and we quote) "A topic of considerable discussion at the Board meeting centered around the fact that **fewer people are becoming licensed amateur radio operators and, hence, membership in the**

ARRL is dropping somewhat."

"An analysis of our membership shows that our core membership consists primarily of those with general class licenses or higher, many of whom have been amateurs for a number of years. The number of Technicians who join ARRL is low when compared to the number of people licensed as Technicians. This leads us into two directions to follow. One is to keep up the activities and policies that appeal to our core members and two, to find out what kinds of things would appeal to the Technician class licensees. In order to keep up the League membership totals these two aspects should be compatible otherwise many of the 'core' members will resign and Technicians will not feel welcome. It is important for the League to increase membership in order to speak with a 'louder' voice in Washington." Brown said she "...would like to see clubs in the NW Division make a special effort to incorporate club activities and programs that will be of interest to new amateurs." [March 1, 1998]

■ For your information, here is the latest **(Feb. 1998) census of U.S. radio-amateurs and ARRL membership by license class and percent of total:**

License Class	Amateur Census	Percent of Total	ARRL Members	Percent of Total
Novice	63972	9.5%	2180	1.4%
Tech.	180929	26.7%	24099	15.7%
Tech+	137908	20.3%	22261	14.5%
Gen.	114986	17.0%	26079	17.1%
Adv.	105943	15.6%	39005	25.5%
Extra	74153	10.9%	39533	25.8%
Total	677891	100%	153157	100%

Bottom line: 57% of all U.S. radio-amateurs hold Tech Plus and lower class licenses. Two-thirds of all ARRL members hold General and higher class tickets - (More than half hold Advanced and Extra Class.)

■ An unwelcome intrusion! Amateurs in South Africa are enraged that the **South African Telecommunications Regulatory Authority (SATRA) has approved the sale of 2-way handheld radios operating between 433 and 434 MHz** by a South African radio dealer raising the possibility of 70-cm Citizens Radio on 70 cm. SARL (South African Radio League) has lodged an objection with SATRA and pointed out that the approval by SATRA is contrary to its own decision to allow only *Industrial, Scientific and Medical* devices in that portion of the spectrum. These hand-held transceivers can hardly be classed as ISM. [Thanks, SARL]

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FIRST EVER VIDEO CONFERENCE HAM CLASS

Big Success for Amateur Radio, *By Gordon West, WB6NOA*

A novel weekend Amateur Radio Technician licensing seminar was hosted by electronic super-store giant, Fry's Electronics (headquartered in San Jose, CA.) This fast-growing mega-store chain has stores all along the Pacific coast, plus a recently opened super-store in Dallas, Texas.

They have a complete aisle devoted to amateur radio equipment and accessories. Each of the Fry's stores also has a multiple vehicle installation facility where every mobile ham set they sell may also be professionally installed.

"We are very serious about our commitment to the amateur radio industry," comments David Randolph, KF6JPE, Fry's Electronic Components Merchandising & Operations Supervisor. "We are making an all-out effort to carry the very latest in ham radio equipment at competitive prices, and we are quite interested in working with local amateur radio clubs and groups to help support the hobby," adds Randolph.

For instance, he allows the *Gordon West Radio School* amateur radio information van to park close to the main entrance of selected Fry's stores on pre-announced weekends to show off our hobby to the thousands of customers who go through the doors every Saturday and Sunday. We have been doing this for over six months and there is no shortage of non-hams who stop by the communications van, look at the capabilities of ham radio and computers, and ultimately sign up for a club's or Gordo's weekend seminars.

MORE ROOMS FOR STUDENTS: The ham communications van usually creates so many weekend sign-ups (home study at least 30 days ahead of time a requirement!) the single classroom holding 50 students would be saturated. But this is no problem for Fry's Electronics — all stores are interconnected with an always-on-line video conference bridge that allows one instructor to address all store classrooms simultaneously. Each store can appear on screen individually at any time to ask questions or seek a close-up of what the instructor was describing.

Our first attempt at video conferencing an amateur radio weekend class was met with unparalleled success. There was absolutely nothing special to do to set up the classroom for the video conference — the camera and the rear-projection system were already in place and on line. All that each of the other stores had to do was to push a single button and they would appear on screen as a picture-in-a-picture. Audio was provided by two stereo speakers mounted above the projection TV. The training class and video conference originated at Fry's Electronics in Anaheim, California.

All of the other Fry's stores had employees who would stop in and monitor the class over the weekend, ...plus guests who heard about the video conference and wanted to learn more about ham radio and what it takes to get a license. And when our in-person class started up on Friday evening, it was interesting how the video conference network operated.

My audio was picked up on a strategically located studio-quality mike. The video was simultaneously relayed to all stores from a very small camcorder which was tied into the video conference network between all stores from Dallas to Portland.

Our classroom was on the large part of the screen with an inset for individual stores who could come up at any time, break in with audio and a close-up picture of the distant student ask-

ing the question or wanting me to do a close-up of a specific component I was passing around in our Anaheim classroom. The outlying stores would see both the main classroom in the big screen, as well as the picture and audio from other stores who came in with questions and comments.

The system worked superbly. I even found that I could direct questions to the different stores, and they would respond with their specific answers. At one point of the ham seminar, I was talking about tropospheric ducting and the cause of a tropo duct by a widespread, high pressure weather system sitting over the region. Portland broke in and told me there would be no tropo duct that day because it was pouring rain. Then Dallas came in and commented that their television department was receiving distant TV stations 150 miles away, and was this the effects of the hot weather they had lately been experiencing?

During the breaks, we took another VHS-C camcorder and videoed amateur radio demonstrations from our communications van located outside of the store. We then relayed the video over the video conference bridge for everyone to see. This worked out well.

When looking at video over the bridge, the digitized picture was relatively clear with only a minor "freeze-frame" motion. Audio was superb. Since the Fry's employees regularly video conference every morning, the video free-frame movements were not at all objectionable. I just had to hold components quite still for those close-up shots to come through.

For testing, we reviewed with everyone on the bridge how to complete the FCC Form 610 and to double check that they were using only the new September 1997 version. We then instructed each store how they could obtain local examinations through their local or national VEC. I obtained from both the ARRL as well as W5YI contact numbers, and we addressed each store with who might be phoned up to take the examination the following week. From what I understand, there were some surprised VE's when they heard about this type of classroom program. And I further understand that those who took their examinations for Novice and Technician at the remote classrooms were almost all completely successful in their test passing.

When it came time to test our own classroom of students, we played some additional ham radio videos that we had recorded earlier out of the communications unit, as well as videos from CQ Magazine and others on getting started in ham radio.

While we don't exactly know what stores were on line for the entire conference, or how many students each store had, we do know that this may have been the country's first wide area video conference held from the "Vi Con" room of a giant electronics super-store. And plans call for additional classes in the San Francisco Bay area, Oregon, and Dallas, Texas.

The actual "live" classroom will be selected where there is the greatest number of students signing up. This will allow us to teach simultaneous classes at all of the other locations where all students will receive exactly the same amount of information at the exact same time. The only difference will be when the classroom may actually take the final exam. And with enough planning by local volunteer examiners, they too could get in on the action and offer testing at the conclusion of the video conference.

We want to see the ham radio service grow, and this is just one of the many ways that we are happy to serve the ham community," comments Fry's Electronics.